

1 36530/RRT/S850

METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR ON-LINE
VALUE-BEARING ITEM SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

10 An on-line value bearing item (VBI) printing system that
includes one or more cryptographic modules and a secure database
is disclosed. The secure database has the ability to recover
data in case of a database failure and includes account balances
and other information for all of the on-line value-bearing item
system customers and is capable of preventing access by
15 unauthorized users. Also, a secure communication network is in
operation to prevent unauthorized access to the users' data
stored in the database.

20 A plurality of subsystems located on the server system side
of the on-line VBI system provide services related to purchasing,
accounting, and printing of VBI. Preferably, these services run
on multiple server machines allowing the system to be scalable.
The number of the servers can easily be increased to meet the
growing needs of the subsystems as the numbers of transactions
and users increase. The growing number of servers will not
25 impact the performance of the on-line postage system, because the
design of the on-line postage system allows for scalability.

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